

Socio Economic and Legal Objectives of Species Reintroduction

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Perspective

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ABOUT THE STUDY

Species re-introduction' is a process to establish a plant or animal in an area which was once part of its historical range, but from which it has been extirpated or become extinct. 'Species re-establishment' is a synonym, which usually implies that the re-introduction has been successful. The term translocation is used to describe the deliberate and mediated movement of wild individuals or populations from one part of their range to another. Reinforcement or supplementation means the addition of individuals to an existing population. Benign introduction' is a process to establish a species, for the purpose of conservation, outside its recorded distribution but within an appropriate habitat and eco-geographical area.

Zoos, aquaria, marine parks, insect houses, botanical gardens - all have their role to play in captive breeding of plants and animals to provide stocks for reintroductions, be it by actually conducting captive breeding, or providing expertise and help. It is estimated that there are about 500,000 animals in captivity in zoos throughout the world. However, it is widely believed that for best results, captive breeding must be done with minimum human contact. The survival of up to 60,000 plant species - about a quarter of the world's total will be threatened over the next few decades by population growth, deforestation, habitat loss, destructive development and agricultural expansion. Human survival is threatened by the destruction of plants on such a massive scale. Plants also supply medicines, especially in developing countries where vast numbers depend on wild plants for their traditional remedies. Plants also help maintain the planet's environmental balance and ecosystem stability and provide habitats for the world's animal life.

Re-introductions are generally long-term projects that require the commitment of long-term financial and political support. Socio-economic studies should be made to assess impacts, costs and benefits of the re-introduction programme to local human populations. A thorough assessment of attitudes of local people to the proposed project

is necessary to ensure long term protection of the re-introduced population, especially if the cause of species' decline was due to human factors (e.g. over-hunting, over-collection, loss or alteration of habitat). The programme should be fully understood, accepted and supported by local communities.

Where the security of the re-introduced population is at risk from human activities, measures should be taken to minimise these in the re-introduction area. If these measures are inadequate, the re-introduction should be abandoned or alternative release areas sought. The policy of the country to re-introductions and to the species concerned should be assessed. This might include checking existing provincial, national and international legislation and regulations, and provision of new measures and required permits as necessary.

Re-introduction must take place with the full permission and involvement of all relevant government agencies of the recipient or host country. This is particularly important in re-introductions in border areas, or involving more than one state or when a re-introduced population can expand into other states, provinces or territories. If the species poses potential risk to life or property, these risks should be minimized and adequate provision made for compensation where necessary; where all other solutions fail, removal or destruction of the released individual should be considered. In the case of migratory/mobile species, provisions should be made for crossing of international/state boundaries. Appropriate veterinary or horticultural measures as required to ensure health of released stock throughout the programme. This is to include adequate quarantine arrangements, especially where founder stock travels far or crosses international boundaries to the release site. Development of transport plans for delivery of stock to the country and site of re-introduction, with special emphasis on ways to minimize stress on the individuals during transport. Determination of release strategy (acclimatization of release stock to release area; behavioural training - including hunting and feeding; group composition, number, release patterns and techniques; timing).